

CBS FACE THE NATION  
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From CBS News, Washington, a spontaneous and unrehearsed news interview on Face the Nation with Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker of Tennessee. Sen. Baker will be questioned by CBS News congressional correspondent Phil Jones; by Mary McGrory, a reporter for the Washington Post; and by the moderator, CBS News correspondent George Herman. Face the Nation is produced by CBS News which is solely responsible for the selection of today's guest and panel.

HERMAN: Sen. Baker, the State Department has released some revisions of the transcript of the broadcast of the Soviet pilot who shot down the Korean plane. One of them is now, it used to read, 'I have enough time.' It's now translated as, 'They do not see me.' Another one has now been translated as, 'I am firing cannon bursts,' which the State Department points out could have been, not necessarily were, but could have been the tracer bullets which the Soviets say their pilot fired to warn them. If it turns out, in fact, that these were tracer bullets, does it affect the situation any at all? Does it change the picture? BAKER: No, I don't think so, Mr. Herman. But I do congratulate the administration and the State Department with going ahead with the release of this information. I, I, I think that it is an important piece of information and that the American people and the world should be aware of it. I talked to Secretary Shultz this morning, early, and he gave me this information and explained the background. That is to say since we received these tapes from our sources in the Far East, for some time now they have been played over and over by our intelligence and security people, and the tapes have been, as they say, electronically enhanced over a period of time, that is, by computer reconstruction so that they can try to get the least bit of conversation. And one of the bits of conversation on that tape, that they've now developed, was indeed the, the conversation from one of the pilots saying, 'I have now, I have fired cannon bursts.' Now, it would be awfully easy for the administration just to ignore that, but they didn't. And I, I think they were very wise in releasing it. Now, I, I, I think even if you accept the idea that these were warning shots, perhaps they were the tracers that the Russians claimed to have fired, it is still no justification by any stretch of the imagination for downing a civilian airliner, a civilian 747. But in all fairness, you've got to say from that conversation, I can't tell whether they were tracer bullets. It says 'cannon rounds,' and whether they were warning shots or fired at the plane... I, I, I really don't think there is any point in me trying to decide that. The important point...

HERMAN: They were apparently fired from behind the plane, which is not how you fire a tracer bullet to get attention (inaudible) ... BAKER: Exactly right.

HERMAN: ...from canopy to canopy. BAKER: And it is also clear from other transmissions that the pilot of the 747 made no mention of it in his transmission. There's no indication that they saw it. That, that I'm afraid is the most I can say about it. I do not think it changes the, the gruesome nature of the Soviet assault on this unarmed aircraft.

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JONES: Senator, it seems almost daily we're getting new interpretations, new translations of, of what was said between the pilots, etc. At any point have you had any suspicions that perhaps the Korean government was not being totally truthful with the United States, and that in fact the commercial airliner might have been fitted

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with cameras? BAKER: No, I have no such information, and no such suspicion. The first word I received of this was by telephone from the White House from a presidential assistant. And the first question I asked on the telephone as I regained my senses in the middle of the night on the telephone was I want to know straight out was there an intelligence mission? Is there something else that I should know? And the assurance, absolutely, back to me was that there was not. I believe that. Since then I have pursued that line of inquiry, and I am absolutely convinced that there was no American complicity. I cannot vouch for the Korean government because I don't know. But I have no reason to believe that there was any intelligence mission by the Korean government in connection with this airline (inaudible).

JONES: You are, you are very aware of intelligence information. Has there been any case where the Koreans have used commercial aircraft for picture taking in that area? BAKER: Not that I am aware of. I get the national intelligence daily, the, NED, so-called, as a matter of routine. I receive briefings periodically by the president's representatives, the CIA and the State Department, which is not to say that I, I know when every fly falls or every bird perishes. But I have a fair overview of the intelligence situation, I believe, as we know it. And I have absolutely no reason to believe that there is any mission of an intelligence nature involved by this airplane at this time.

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*EXCERPTED*